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Letter dated 2 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I am writing to you concerning the statements made by the representatives of Armenia and the Syrian regime during the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, on 19 and 23 September 2017, respectively.

Concerning the statement made by the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, I would like to underline, first and foremost, that "genocide" is a legal term defining a specific crime under international law. Therefore, no matter how tragic the events might be, this term can only be applied to acts labelled as such, solely by a competent court. As far as the events of 1915 are concerned, there is no such judgment. There is no scholarly consensus either on the 1915 events. Political motions or statements adopted by a limited number of parliaments, which are of a non-binding and subjective character, do not change the true nature of what really happened in 1915.

Having made that clear, we once again reiterate that what we want is a just memory of the past, to honour the memories of all those who passed away during World War I, which included millions of Ottoman Muslims. This is exactly why the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made a proposal to form a joint historical commission to reveal the truth, back in 2005, which, although left unanswered so far, is still on the table.

Turkey's quest to normalize its relations with Armenia is part of its broader vision, which foresees cooperative and mutually beneficial relations among all the countries of the Caucasus. The signing of protocols in Zurich in 2009 was the culmination of Turkey's sincerity towards normalizing its relations with Armenia. Turkey maintains its willingness to normalize its relations with Armenia and hence, the protocols still remain on the agenda of the Turkish Parliament. Unfortunately, we do not see a similar constructive approach from the Armenian side.

Bearing in mind that, in February 2015, the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, himself recalled the protocols from the Armenian Parliament, his remarks at the general debate regarding the protocols are self-contradictory and inconsistent.

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We maintain our hope that the Armenian leadership will soon comprehend the realities of the region and take constructive steps to engage in meaningful dialogue with its neighbours and put an end to its self-isolating policies.

As to the statement delivered by the representative of the Syrian regime, which lost its legitimacy a long time ago, we reject it in its entirety. Turkey's position on Syria, with political, security and humanitarian aspects, was shared on the first day of the general debate with the membership of the United Nations at the highest political level.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative